UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/237
19 March 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

TWENTY-SECOND PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1083 (1996) of 27 November 1996, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 31 March 1997. The report provides an update on developments in Liberia since my previous report dated 29 January 1997 (S/1997/90), and contains recommendations on the role to be played by UNOMIL in the forthcoming Liberian elections.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

2. During the period under review, further progress has been made towards the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. There have been significant achievements in the disarmament of fighters which, under the revised schedule of implementation of the Abuja Agreement, was to be completed by 31 January 1997. The Monitoring Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMOG) has received some of the additional troops pledged to it, and has continued to extend its presence into the interior of the country, thus facilitating greater access by humanitarian agencies. With the improvement in the security situation, the civilian population is gradually beginning to gain the confidence to move freely in some hitherto unsafe areas of the country. The level of disarmament thus far achieved has also made it possible to begin preparing for the holding of elections. The United Nations, in consultation with the Liberian National Transitional Government, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other partners, has already started to prepare for its role in the electoral process.

3. As part of the periodic assessments provided for under the Abuja Agreement, the ECOWAS Committee of Nine held its second Ministerial Meeting in Monrovia on 13 and 14 February 1997 under the chairmanship of Chief Tom Ikimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria. Representatives of States members of the Committee, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, as well as Liberia, Mali, the Niger and Sierra Leone, participated in the meeting, which was also attended by my Special

Representative, the Eminent Person of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Special Envoy of the President of the United States of America for Liberia and other interested parties.

4. During the Meeting, the Ministers held extensive consultations with the Council of State, which resulted in important decisions concerning the implementation of the final phase of the peace process, particularly the conduct of elections. The recommendations which emerged from those deliberations have now been endorsed by the Chairman of ECOWAS, and are discussed in section IV below.

5. In keeping with the Abuja Agreement, which required holders of public office wishing to contest the elections to relinquish their posts by 28 February 1997, George Boley, Alhaji Kromah and Charles Taylor have resigned from the Council of State. They were succeeded by three new members, who were sworn in on 7 March 1997. The Speaker and several members of the Transitional Legislative Assembly who intend to contest legislative seats also resigned from the Assembly.

6. While searching the executive mansion on 6 March as part of its ongoing operations to recover weapons not handed in during the official disarmament period, ECOMOG discovered a quantity of weapons and ammunition there. On 7 March, a simultaneous search was conducted at the residences of the three retiring Council of State members, George Boley, Alhaji Kromah and Charles Taylor, as well as that of Roosevelt Johnson. No illegal weapons were found at the Boley, Johnson and Taylor residences, but Mr. Kromah was detained following the discovery of three truckloads of weapons and ammunition at his house in Monrovia.

7. The situation in the country following the discovery of the weapons cache at Mr. Kromah's residence and his arrest remained relatively calm. Major-General Victor Malu, the ECOMOG Force Commander, publicly warned Liberians that ECOMOG would not tolerate any act that might lead to a breach of the peace, and reiterated ECOMOG's determination to retrieve hidden arms.

8. On 14 March, however, the ECOMOG Force Commander requested that all charges against Mr. Kromah be dropped amid concerns expressed by many prominent Liberians about the possible impact of his arrest on the fragile peace process, and in the light of a statement by Mr. Kromah admitting that it had been an error on his part to keep the weapons beyond 31 January. The Force Commander also requested the Liberian authorities to extend a general amnesty to all others arrested for possession of illegal weapons after the end of the official disarmament period.

9. Following the dissolution of the armed factions on 31 January, the period under review has witnessed a revitalization of civil society, and political parties that remained dormant during the civil war have been reactivated to prepare for the elections. As at 18 March 1997, eight political parties had registered with the Ad Hoc Elections Commission, while another 12 had been proposed for registration. These parties have been engaged in selecting their candidates for the presidential elections.

10. In the last few weeks, the Chairman of the Council of State has convened a number of cabinet meetings to discuss the security situation in Monrovia in the light of the increasing incidence of armed robberies. Some reforms have also been undertaken within the police force, with the appointment of a new Police Director.

11. In my letter to the President of the Security Council dated 25 February 1997 (S/1997/167), I informed him of the outcome of the second Ministerial Meeting of the ad hoc Special Conference to Support the Peace Process in Liberia, which was held in New York on 20 February 1997 with more than 140 participants. As I informed the President in my letter, the high degree of consensus apparent during the meeting demonstrated that there was now the necessary political will both inside and outside Liberia for the peace process to succeed. I also noted that donors had made it clear that they were ready to provide the resources needed, and that the meeting had sent a very clear message to the parties that if they made progress the international community would respond generously.

III. MILITARY ASPECTS

Status of the ceasefire

12. Relative peace has continued to prevail throughout Liberia, with no ceasefire violations reported since 12 January 1997. Complaints made by both wings of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K) have been rejected as unfounded by the Ceasefire Violations Committee.

Disarmament and demobilization

13. Following the expiry of the deadline for disarmament on 31 January 1997, ECOMOG announced a one-week grace period to allow fighters who had not had the opportunity to disarm to do so. During the official disarmament period between 22 November 1996 and 9 February 1997, a total of 20,332 fighters (61.61 per cent of the estimated total of 33,000) were disarmed under UNOMIL supervision (see annex I), while 21,315 fighters, including 4,306 child fighters under the age of 18 and 250 adult female fighters, were demobilized by the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office (HACO). More than 9,570 weapons and 1.2 million pieces of ammunition were also surrendered. Pockets of armed fighters, however, continue to exist in areas that were inaccessible during the official disarmament period, particularly in Grand Kru and Maryland counties. ECOMOG and UNOMIL are planning to mount joint operations to carry out disarmament in those areas in cooperation with the former local commanders of the disbanded factions.

14. Since the end of the disarmament exercise UNOMIL, in consultation with ECOMOG, has continued to encourage voluntary disarmament by keeping open 10 of its 15 disarmament and demobilization centres and offering to issue HACO identity cards to anyone who surrenders a serviceable weapon. This has resulted in the collection of a further 89 weapons and 244 pieces of ammunition. Most of those weapons were recovered from Bo Waterside, Bong Mines, Buchanan, Monrovia, Tubmanburg and Voinjama. At the same time, ECOMOG cordon and search operations

have yielded an additional 917 weapons and 122,162 pieces of ammunition, as well as the arrest of 98 fighters.

ECOMOG and UNOMIL deployment

15. With the recent induction of a 650-man Malian battalion and a 500-man Ghanaian battalion, the strength of ECOMOG has been increased to approximately 10,000, currently deployed throughout the country except in Grand Kru and River Cess counties, where they expect to deploy very soon. In ECOMOG's assessment, which is fully shared by UNOMIL, an additional three battalions would be required for the peacekeeping force to perform the security-related and other tasks envisaged for it during the forthcoming elections. Those troops would also enable ECOMOG to deploy in Grand Kru and River Cess counties and reinforce its presence in Lofa, Sinoe and Maryland counties.

16. At a meeting of ECOWAS Chiefs of Staff that took place in Monrovia on 10 and 11 February, the Chiefs of Staff of Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia and the Niger indicated the intention of their respective Governments to contribute additional troops to ECOMOG.

17. The military component of UNOMIL has now reached its full authorized strength of one Chief Military Observer and 92 military observers, most of whom are deployed to the 10 disarmament sites of Bo Waterside, Buchanan, Gbarnga, Greenville, Harper, Kakata, Tapeta, Tubmanburg, Voinjama and Zwedru, and at UNOMIL headquarters in Monrovia (see annex II and map).

IV. ELECTORAL PROCESS

18. On 10 February 1997, following the formal end of the disarmament and demobilization phase, I wrote to the President of the Security Council transmitting to him a copy of the United Nations recommendations on a framework for the holding of elections in Liberia, prepared at the request of the Council of State following consultations with the Chairman of ECOWAS. Substantially along the lines proposed in the recommendations, agreement was subsequently reached between the Council of State and the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on a basic framework for the holding of elections in Liberia.

19. In a letter dated 18 February, the Chairman of ECOWAS confirmed to me his endorsement of the electoral recommendations which had emerged from the deliberations of the Ministerial Meeting and requested my support in this regard. The Chairman noted that he had asked the Liberian Council of State to take steps to ensure their implementation before the end of February 1997. The Chairman of ECOWAS informed me that he would also be consulting with other ECOWAS heads of State on matters related to the implementation of the peace process.

20. The recommendations endorsed by the Chairman of ECOWAS are as follows:

(a) The date of elections as scheduled under the Revised Abuja Peace Plan, set for 30 May 1997, will be strictly adhered to;

(b) The elections will be organized and conducted by an independent Elections Commission, which will comprise seven Liberian citizens: three to be appointed by the former warring factions, and four from civil society. The Chairman of the Commission will be appointed from among the seven members after due consultation with ECOWAS. The Commission is to be assisted by a Committee of Technical Advisers, comprising three representatives, one each from ECOWAS, the United Nations and OAU. The Technical Advisers, who will participate in all deliberations of the Commission, will exercise no voting rights. The Elections Commission should meet shortly to formulate an electoral package for the upcoming elections;

(c) Disputes will be adjudicated by the Supreme Court, whose members will be appointed in consultation with the Liberian judiciary and the Bar Association for review by ECOWAS;

(d) The parliament to be elected will be bicameral, with a House of Assembly of 64 members and a Senate of 26 members, and elections will be conducted on the basis of proportional representation under a single constituency;

(e) It was accepted that refugees will not vote in their host countries. In this connection, the ECOWAS Committee of Nine took particular note of the strong objections of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire to refugees voting within their territories. The Foreign Ministers, however, urged the United Nations and the specialized agencies to assist with the prompt repatriation of refugees who are willing to return to Liberia in time to participate in the registration and voting process.

21. The Chairman of ECOWAS has endorsed the nomination by the Council of State of seven individuals as members of the Elections Commission. Nominations for the Supreme Court have also been forwarded to ECOWAS for approval. The United Nations, OAU and ECOWAS have identified their candidates to serve as technical advisers to the Elections Commission. They are expected to take up their duties this month.

22. On 26 February, I despatched an electoral assessment mission to Liberia to assess current electoral requirements and make recommendations on the role which UNOMIL could play in the electoral process. In addition to Monrovia, the Mission also travelled to Abuja for discussions with representatives of ECOWAS.

23. The Mission concluded that conditions in Liberia provided a reasonable basis for the organization and conduct of elections, and that such elections could take place on 30 May 1997, the date to which all actors are firmly committed. In broad terms, this timetable would entail the enactment of the electoral law and regulations by the end of March, the registration of voters in April, and the conduct of the election campaign in May.

24. In view of the decision that refugees should not register and vote in the countries of asylum, the Mission concluded that refugee participation could best be enhanced through a proactive approach to repatriation, coupled with additional efforts to facilitate registration and voting by returnees.

25. With respect to the provision of technical assistance for the electoral process, the Mission noted that overall international technical assistance needs for the elections were estimated by donors at between $10 million and $12 million, excluding the costs of ECOMOG and UNOMIL. On the basis of the commitments made by the principal donors, the Mission concluded that adequate funding was available to carry out the technical aspects of the electoral process satisfactorily, and that there was no expectation that the United Nations would be asked to procure ballots or other election commodities or fund significant aspects of the electoral process.

26. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that the United Nations system will play an essential role in the forthcoming elections. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will provide, in conjunction with other international organizations, critical technical assistance to the electoral authorities, ranging from advice on electoral management to voter estimates, voter registration, polling and civic education. The role expected to be played by UNOMIL, though limited, will be equally significant. In addition to its existing mandate to observe and verify the electoral process, UNOMIL will principally be expected to work jointly with ECOWAS to ensure adequate coordination of the electoral process. UNOMIL's logistical assets and resources will constitute a key element of the transportation and information infrastructure supporting the registration and polling process. UNOMIL will also support voter education.

27. Discussions with ECOWAS authorities dealt with the concept of a joint coordination mechanism which would focus on four main tasks:

(a) Ensuring that operational requirements are met and that the process itself remains operationally on track;

(b) Coordinating the deployment, logistics and security arrangements for international observers;

(c) Identifying gaps and needs in the electoral process;

(d) Jointly certifying whether the election is free and fair.

28. The joint coordination mechanism would operate flexibly and informally and would be chaired jointly by ECOWAS and the United Nations. In practice this authority would be exercised by the respective representatives of the two organizations in Monrovia. The mechanism would also include the ECOMOG Force Commander and the UNOMIL Chief Military Observer, as well as the heads of the electoral components of UNOMIL and ECOWAS. The Organization of African Unity would be invited to participate. Close and regular contact would also be maintained with all the key operational actors, as well as relevant United Nations agencies.

29. On the basis of my assessment of the current situation in Liberia and the continued contribution which UNOMIL can make to the peace process, I recommend the following:

(a) That UNOMIL's electoral unit, which currently comprises only one person, be strengthened by the addition of three electoral officers at UNOMIL headquarters and 36 civilian electoral observers, of whom 33 would be United Nations Volunteers, who would arrive on site in early April; and that a consultant be recruited to serve as the United Nations technical adviser and non-voting member of the Elections Commission;

(b) That 200 additional personnel be recruited from among existing UNOMIL and United Nations staff members, as well as from Member States and regional organizations such as ECOWAS to observe the polling and counting of votes, to be in the country for approximately one week from about 24 May;

(c) That provision be made for undertaking a "quick count";

(d) That additional resources be made available by the international community to enhance efforts to encourage and assist in the repatriation of refugees;

(e) That a clear understanding be reached with ECOMOG regarding its responsibilities for the protection and security of international personnel during the electoral process.

30. Public information will be a critical component of electoral preparations, especially since the existing media in Liberia are highly partisan. In order to ensure that Liberian voters receive neutral, factual information about the electoral process, voting procedures and related matters, I further recommend that UNOMIL be authorized to make appropriate arrangements for the production and broadcast of daily radio programmes prepared by UNOMIL and United Nations agency information personnel. This would entail the leasing of production facilities and securing access to air time on local radio stations, as well as an increase in UNOMIL's staff, including by the secondment of one professional radio officer.

31. It is envisaged that the existing disarmament sites will be converted into electoral observation bases. Their number would be increased from 10 to 14 to ensure that all 12 counties (outside Monrovia) are adequately covered, Lofa and Nimba having two bases each. UNOMIL and ECOMOG are shortly planning to deploy in Grand Kru and River Cess counties. Each electoral observation base would share a location with an ECOMOG camp.

32. Each electoral observation base would have three to four mobile teams, as far as possible each comprising a civilian observer, as team leader, and a military observer. In addition, one military observer would be stationed at the communication facility established at each base, so that effective communications could be maintained at all times between the mobile team, the local ECOMOG commander and UNOMIL headquarters in Monrovia. The number of mobile teams in a base would depend on population density. Monrovia would be covered by six mobile teams, operating out of UNOMIL headquarters.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

33. UNOMIL is currently staffed by three human rights officers and is now in a position to monitor human rights issues more closely. Human rights monitoring has begun in prisons and in the area of civic education. Liberian human rights organizations are using the pre-electoral period to sensitize the Liberian population to its rights and to address a wide variety of human rights issues. UNOMIL is assisting those organizations by identifying possible sources of funding for their programmes and by publicly supporting their initiatives.

34. The Liberian human rights community continues to strengthen itself and to make its presence felt on the Liberian political and social scene. Several organizations working together are in the process of establishing, with assistance from UNOMIL, the Liberia Human Rights Centre in Monrovia. The proposed centre will serve as the focal point for addressing human rights issues in Liberia and will contain the National Library of Human Rights Issues.

35. UNOMIL has completed its investigations into the ambush, on 14 December 1996, of a taxi on Bomi Highway, in which four persons were killed. Two suspects have been arrested and have identified nine other individuals who allegedly collaborated with them in carrying out the attack. The two are now in detention awaiting trial. All 11 suspects belong to the now-disbanded Congo Defence Force.

36. The local authorities have reported that some 50 of the persons who were abducted after the massacre that took place in Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County, in September 1996, have been released and have returned to their homes. Interviews by UNOMIL human rights officers indicate that the release followed an agreement between the former ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J commanders in the area to cease hostilities and establish friendly relations.

37. Following allegations that some ECOMOG soldiers may have mistreated former fighters during weapons recovery operations conducted after the end of the official disarmament period, UNOMIL has invited ECOMOG to undertake an investigation. ECOMOG has indicated that it has launched an investigation into the matter.

VI. HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS

Relief operations

38. Though constraints on the movement and activities of the humanitarian community still exist and road conditions are poor, the humanitarian community is continuing to expand its operations in the interior of Liberia and its access to the population there. Remaining disarmament and demobilization sites now also function as centres for early phase reintegration, and serve as crucial bases for the provision of health and humanitarian services in the countryside. The humanitarian community now has access to 12 of the 13 counties, the exception being Grand Kru. Encouraged by the presence and increasing activity of humanitarian assistance workers, refugees and displaced persons have begun returning to their homes.

39. The World Food Programme (WFP) continues to distribute about 2,100 metric tons of assorted food commodities monthly to approximately 252,000 displaced persons and refugees in accessible areas of the country. WFP also administers a school feeding programme, and continues to support therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes run by medical non-governmental organizations in four counties.

40. The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to support the programmes of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, with emphasis on disease surveillance and control. WHO has also conducted training for 300 health workers in disease prevention and control.

41. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), working with WFP, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Ministry of Education and non-governmental organizations, is revitalizing 1,830 primary schools in six counties. UNICEF is also continuing to ensure that basic health services and adequate water and sanitation facilities are available to internally displaced persons and rural communities.

42. With the significant improvement in security conditions arising from the disarmament and demobilization process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has launched its Plan of Action to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of the estimated 768,000 Liberian refugees from the countries of asylum within the subregion. To that end, UNHCR is collaborating with other agencies and implementing partners in the rehabilitation of the receiving communities with a view to attaining rapid reintegration. It is anticipated that UNHCR will, as a priority, facilitate the voluntary repatriation of all those refugees wishing to participate in the coming elections. Additional field offices will be opened in the major areas of return to bolster protection and monitoring of refugee reintegration.

Bridging and reintegration programmes

43. The number of local staff at each demobilization site has been reduced and will be further reduced at the end of March. This will reduce HACO's national demobilization staff from a total of 159 in March to 96 in April. These sites are also serving as bases for bridging activities in their respective areas, and are expected to continue to do so until at least early June 1997.

44. Reintegration now constitutes the main focus of effort, and bridging programmes have gained a satisfactory momentum. The programmes are being carried out by three major actors: the European Union, UNDP and HACO. The latter coordinates bridging activities, whereas the Ministry of Planning and UNDP will coordinate the longer-term reintegration programmes, with UNHCR taking a lead role in early reintegration activities in the major returnee areas. European Union projects, which are concentrated in the south-east, employ 3,000 civilians and former fighters. The UNDP/United Nations Office for Project Services projects involve civil reconstruction. As at 14 March 1997, 47 such projects were engaging 3,952 civilians and former fighters. HACO, whose projects are implemented through non-governmental organizations, has approved 12 projects that will engage an additional 1,200 ex-fighters and other war-affected persons.

45. With UNDP funding, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched a vocational training programme to increase the availability of skilled labour and jobs. That programme is expected to benefit 1,100 persons and to be extended nationwide as conditions permit.

46. UNICEF is leading the reintegration of former child soldiers, with the aim of directing them into vocational or formal education institutions. Most of the 4,306 demobilized child fighters have been reunited with their families. A few remain in transit homes while their families are being traced.

47. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is working with the private sector on a rehabilitation scheme by which ex-combatants will be provided with jobs in smallholder rubber plantations, of which about 40 have been identified. The Forestry Development Authority and FAO have developed a proposal for the rehabilitation of public forests in Bomi County which will create 500 jobs, including 250 for ex-combatants and 100 for women.

VII. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

48. The resumption of agricultural work will be central to the resettlement and reintegration of the displaced population and refugees, most of whom are from rural areas. Accordingly, UNDP has granted funds for the purchase of seed rice, groundnuts and vegetable seeds under a project to be executed by FAO. Those seeds are now being distributed to farmers. Under a project being executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services, UNDP is providing diversified emergency assistance, including education support, electricity supply to the J. F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital and logistical support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

49. UNDP has also approved a project designed to assist key public institutions which will assist in the resettlement and reintegration programmes, including the Ministries of Planning and Economic Affairs, Justice, Commerce and Agriculture and the Bureau of the Budget. Together with WHO and the International Civil Aviation Organization, UNDP is also funding other projects to strengthen a rapid epidemic response task force, and to increase air traffic safety at the James Spriggs Payne Airport in Monrovia.

Reconstruction planning

50. The reconstruction process initiated prior to April 1996 under the joint leadership of UNDP and the World Bank is being reactivated. It is expected that the formulation of the reconstruction plan will be completed by the end of the third quarter of the current year, thus allowing the government which will be formed after the elections to be better equipped to rebuild the country.

51. FAO is assisting in the development of a national plan for reintegration in agriculture by providing jobs for war-affected farmers, returning villagers and ex-combatants in some 200 village communities.

VIII. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

52. The second revised budget of UNOMIL (A/51/756/Add.1), as amended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (see A/51/423/Add.1), which is currently before the General Assembly for its consideration, proposes resources totalling $31,915,000 gross for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, and for the implementation of the disarmament and demobilization programme which concluded on 8 February 1996. It does not include resources for the electoral process.

53. Therefore, should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIL as recommended in paragraph 65 below, the additional requirements for the electoral component of UNOMIL will be sought from the General Assembly at its current session.

54. As at 11 March 1997, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIL special account since the inception of the Mission amounted to $4.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations on 11 March 1997 was $1,829 million.

55. With regard to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Cotonou Agreement in Liberia, total contributions received as at 11 March amounted to $24.7 million, and authorized expenditure totalled $23.5 million.

IX. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

56. The progress made since my last report on UNOMIL to the Security Council is generally encouraging. In particular, the outcome of the disarmament and demobilization exercise, while not a complete success, can be considered to be substantial compliance with the Abuja Agreement. The revitalization of Liberian civil society and the improved security situation throughout the country are also cause for optimism, as is the resumption of cabinet meetings by the Liberian National Transitional Government and the reforms initiated within the police force.

57. On the military side, I wish to express my appreciation to the United States Government for transporting the additional battalions from Ghana and Mali to strengthen ECOMOG, as well as to the Governments of Denmark and the Netherlands for the assistance they have provided. The international community should stand ready to assist other ECOWAS member countries that have pledged forces to ECOMOG, and to render assistance as needed to ECOMOG itself, so as to reinforce its capabilities in the field and to enable it to create a security environment conducive to the holding of free and fair elections.

58. While I welcome the improvement in the security situation in Liberia, the discovery by ECOMOG of weapons at the executive mansion and, the following day, at the residence of Alhaji Kromah, is cause for serious concern. I am gratified, however, that so far these incidents do not seem to have touched off a violent response. I commend ECOMOG on its prompt and effective action, and strongly support its call for restraint.

59. The main focus of UNOMIL must now be the forthcoming elections. I concur with the recommendations made by the ECOWAS Committee of Nine (see para. 20 above). Should the Council approve the activities to be carried out by UNOMIL which I propose in section IV of the present report, I will urgently seek budgetary authority from the General Assembly for the resources which will enable UNOMIL effectively to observe and verify this final stage of the Abuja peace plan.

60. The timetable for the conduct of the elections is extremely tight. For elections to take place as scheduled on 30 May, the Liberian Elections Commission and its international partners, including UNOMIL, must undertake myriad complex and meticulous preparations. While commending ECOWAS, the Council of State and Liberian civil society, the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development and the International Foundation for Election Systems on what they have accomplished so far, I must express concern at the delay in the installation of the new independent Elections Commission and the reconstituted Supreme Court, and the implications of this delay for the electoral process. The United Nations and its agencies must make every effort to ensure that they too act in a timely, coordinated and effective manner to maintain the necessary momentum in this joint effort.

61. ECOMOG is the key to the provision of adequate security for the elections. If elections are to be held successfully, it will be essential for ECOMOG to receive the resources necessary for it to perform the tasks assigned to it. ECOMOG's requirements relate to transportation, particularly vehicle maintenance and spare parts, petroleum products, communications, medical needs and anti-riot equipment. I call on donor countries to contribute to meeting these needs, and express my appreciation to the Government of Japan for its generous donation of $300,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia, earmarked for electoral assistance activities and bridging programmes for disarmed combatants.

62. Noting in his letter to me dated 18 February that ECOMOG would begin to withdraw from Liberia six months after the elections, the Chairman of ECOWAS proposed that a process should commence for the restructuring of the Liberian armed forces, the police and other security agencies, with assistance from the United Nations and the international community. I consider this an essential peace-building step which should help the incoming government build on the progress made in the last few months.

63. As noted in my letter to the President of the Security Council of 25 February (S/1997/167), the second Ministerial Meeting of the ad hoc Special Conference to Support the Peace Process in Liberia revealed a significant degree of international support for the efforts Liberians, ECOWAS, the United Nations and others have made to resolve that country's problems. I trust that the international community will continue to respond generously to the needs of the Liberian people and its incoming government.

64. Whereas much remains to be done and it is essential to remain alert to the dangers that still persist, the prospects for peace in Liberia now seem to be more promising than at any time since the start of the civil war. The people of Liberia deserve appreciation for their resilience and perseverance in the search for peace. A large measure of credit is due to ECOWAS and its Chairman, and to

ECOMOG. I also wish to pay tribute to the important contribution made by the Special Representative, Mr. Anthony Nyakyi, and the military and civilian staff of UNOMIL, as well as the Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and their staff. They have laboured under difficult conditions, not without personal risk, and often with very scarce resources.

65. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a period of three months, until the end of June 1997, at which time I expect to be in a position to report on the conduct and the results of the elections, including any presidential run-off election that might be necessary. In the meantime, I will keep the Security Council informed of all significant developments.

Annex I

DISARMAMENT BY FACTION AS AT 9 FEBRUARY 1997

Faction	Estimated strength		Fighters disarmed	Percentage
	Original	Revised		
National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)	25 000	12 500	11 553	92.42
ULIMO	12 460	6 800	5 622	82.68
Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)	8 734	7 000	571	08.15
ULIMO-J	7 776	3 800	1 114	29.32
Liberian Peace Council (LPC)	4 650	2 500	1 223	48.92
Lofa Defence Force (LDF)	750	400	249	62.25
Total	59 370	33 000	20 332[a]	61.61

[a] Does not include the fighters disarmed directly by ECOMOG at various checkpoints in Monrovia and elsewhere away from official disarmament sites manned by UNOMIL.

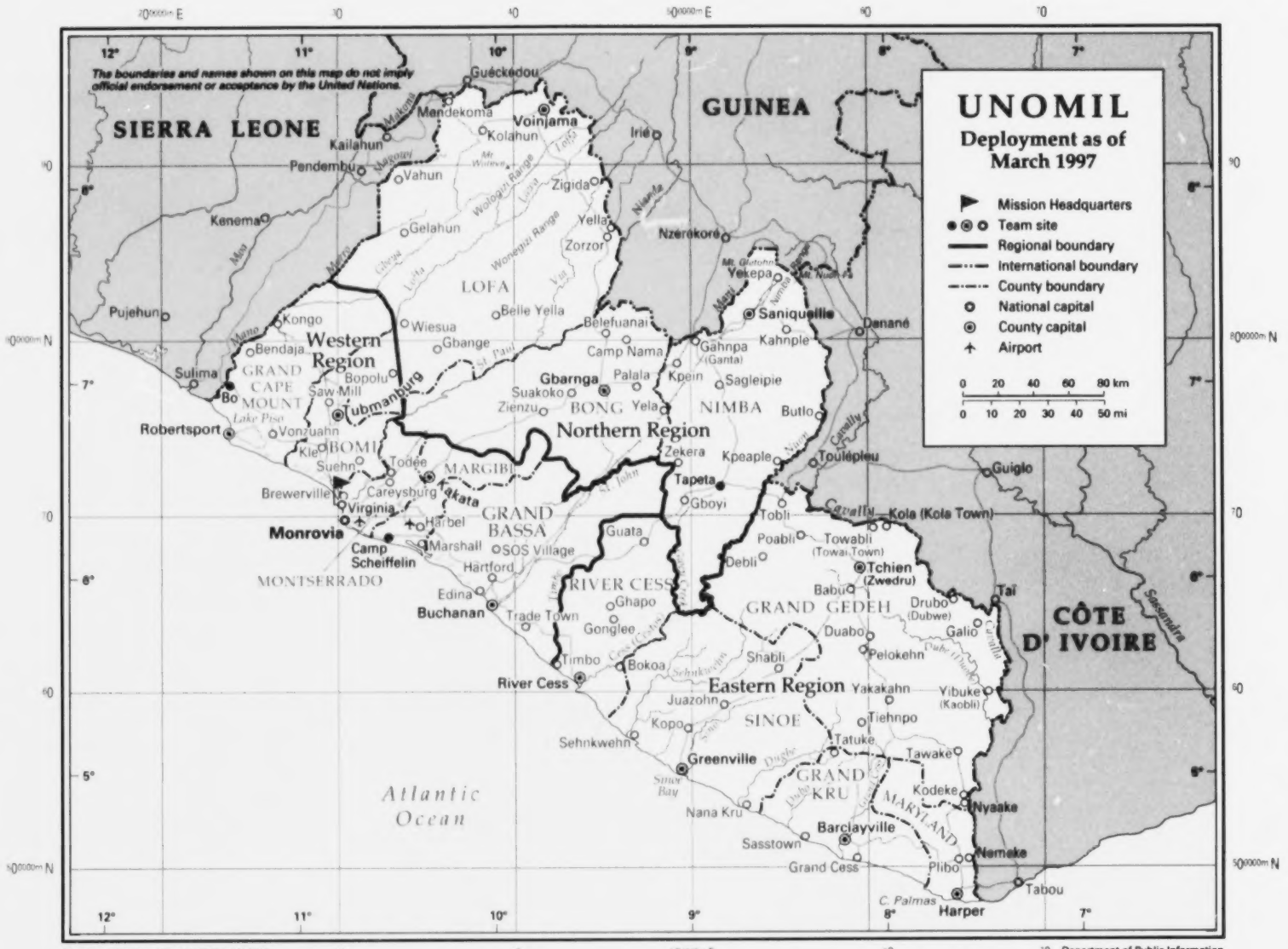
Annex II

COMPOSITION OF THE MILITARY COMPONENT OF UNOMIL
AS AT 15 MARCH 1997

	Military observers	Others[a]	Total
Bangladesh	7	7	14
China	7		7
Czech Republic	5		5
Egypt	14		14
India	14		14
Kenya	13		13
Malaysia	3		3
Nepal	6		6
Pakistan	14[b]		14
Uruguay	2	—	2
Total	85	7	92

[a] Medical staff.

[b] Including one observer being deployed.


The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
UNOMIL
Deployment as of March 1997
Mission Headquarters
Team site
Regional boundary
International boundary
County boundary
National capital
County capital
Airport
0 20 40 60 80 km
0 10 20 30 40 50 mi
SIERRA LEONE
GUINEA
CÔTE D' IVOIRE
Atlantic Ocean
Western Region
Northern Region
Eastern Region
GRAND CAPE MOUNT
BOMI
MARGIBI
GRAND BASSA
MONTSERRADO
RIVER CESS
GRAND GEDEH
SINOE
GRAND KRU
MARYLAND
LOFA
BONG
NIMBA
Guéckédou
Mandekoma
Voinjama
Kolahun
Irié
Kailahun
Pendembu
Vahun
Zigida
Kenema
Gelahun
Yella
Zorzor
Nzérékoré
Yekepa
Saniquellie
Danané
Pujehun
Kongo
Wiesua
Belle Yella
Belefuanai
Bendaja
Gbange
Camp Nama
Gahnpa (Ganta)
Kahnple
Sulima
Bopolu
Gbarnga
Palala
Kpein
Sagleipie
Bo
Saw Mill
Tubmanburg
Suakoko
Zienzu
Yela
Butlo
Robertsport
Lake Piso
Vonzuahn
Kle
Suehn
Todee
Zekera
Kpeaple
Toulépleu
Guiglo
Brewerville
Careysburg
Kakata
Tapeta
Gboyi
Virginia
Harbel
Tobli
Kola (Kola Town)
Monrovia
Camp Scheiffelin
Marshall
SOS Village
Guata
Poabli
Towabli (Towai Town)
Hartford
Debli
Tchien (Zwedru)
Edina
Ghapo
Babu
Taï
Buchanan
Trade Town
Gonglee
Drubo (Dubwe)
Galio
Duabo
Pelokehn
Timbo
Bokoa
Shabli
River Cess
Juazohn
Yakakahn
Yibuke (Kaobli)
Kopo
Tiehnpo
Sehnkwehn
Tatuke
Tawake
Greenville
Kodeke
Nyaake
Nana Kru
Barclayville
Sasstown
Nemeke
Grand Cess
Plibo
Tabou
C. Palmas
Harper
Map No. 3802 Rev. 22 UNITED NATIONS
March 1997
Department of Public Information
Cartographic Section

UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/238
19 March 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 19 MARCH 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to bring to your attention the text of the communiqué of the Summit of the Nairobi II Committee on the Crisis on the Great Lakes Region (see annex) and to request that you circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Njuguna M. MAHUGU, OGW
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

97-07539 (E) 190397

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Annex

Communiqué issued at Nairobi on 19 March 1997 by the Summit of the Nairobi II Committee on the Crisis in the Great Lakes Region

1. At the invitation of President Daniel T. arap Moi of the Republic of Kenya, Heads of State and Government forming the Committee of Four, as mandated by the Nairobi II Summit of 16 December 1996, namely, President Robert G. Mugabe of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki of the Republic of South Africa, representing President Nelson R. Mandela, Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge, representing President Paul Biya of the Republic of Cameroon, current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), met at Nairobi on 19 March 1997 to pursue the peace initiative on eastern Zaire. President Pascal Lissouba of the Republic of the Congo and Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo of the Republic of Zaire attended by special invitation.

2. Also participating in the Summit was the Secretary-General of OAU, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, and Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, Joint United Nations/OAU Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region.

3. The Summit examined developments in the region since Nairobi II and expressed grave concern at the rapidly deteriorating situation in eastern Zaire, in particular the continued loss of life, suffering of refugees, displaced persons and other victims of the conflict and the destruction of property and infrastructure.

4. The Summit urged all parties to do their utmost to facilitate access for humanitarian assistance and invited all United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations to provide that assistance.

5. The Summit reaffirmed its commitment to respect of the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Zaire as provided for in the Charters of the OAU and the United Nations.

6. The Summit welcomed the participation of Zaire and reaffirmed its commitment to the search for peace in an effort to achieve a lasting solution to the crisis.

7. The Summit reaffirmed the urgent need for the implementation of the OAU/United Nations peace plan as provided for in Security Council resolution 1097 (1997) of 18 February 1997. It welcomed the acceptance of the plan by the Government of Zaire and also took note of the acceptance in principle by the other party. The Summit urged all parties to the conflict unconditionally to accept and implement the peace plan.

8. The Summit urged the parties to the conflict to cease hostilities immediately and to create the necessary environment to facilitate a negotiated settlement.

9. The Summit resolved that diplomatic efforts should be intensified in the search for a lasting solution to the Zairian crisis and urged that, in so doing, all initiatives be coordinated, and in this context welcomed the forthcoming extraordinary summit of the Central Organ of OAU at Lomé, on 26 March 1997.

10. The Summit underscored the importance of establishing a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the OAU/United Nations peace plan. In that context, the Summit stressed the importance of Africa's making its own significant contribution to the Mechanism. The Summit invites the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, meeting at Lomé on 26 March 1997, to address this issue.

11. The Summit expressed its appreciation to President Daniel T. arap Moi and to the Government and people of Kenya for hosting the meeting and for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to the delegations.

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/239
19 March 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS ANGOLA VERIFICATION MISSION (UNAVEM III)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1098 (1997) of 27 February 1997, in which the Council, inter alia, urged the Government of Angola and, in particular, the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) to establish without delay the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation, and requested me to report by 20 March 1997 on the status of the formation of that Government.

II. STATUS OF THE FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

2. My report to the Security Council of 7 February 1997 (S/1997/115) described the strenuous efforts undertaken by my Special Representative, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, with the support of the representatives of the three observer States (Portugal, the Russian Federation and the United States of America), to encourage the Government and UNITA to establish the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation earlier this year, in accordance with the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol (S/1994/1441, annex) and subsequent agreements between the two parties. Regrettably, those attempts were unsuccessful and the Security Council therefore decided to call on the parties to implement their agreements strictly and to form the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation without linkages or further delay.

3. Following the adoption, on 27 February, of Security Council resolution 1098 (1997), the Government of Angola proposed to establish 20 March 1997 as the date for the inauguration of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. It also suggested that the UNITA deputies in the National Assembly and UNITA officials designated to take up posts in the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation arrive in Luanda well in advance of that date. This matter was the subject of intense consultations between the parties and in the Joint Commission. While agreeing in principle to the early arrival of its representatives, UNITA expressed the view that no specific date should be

determined and announced regarding the arrival of its deputies and officials in the capital. At the same time, UNITA indicated that its President, Mr. Jonas Savimbi, would make an important announcement during the ceremonies marking the thirty-first anniversary of the establishment of UNITA on 13 March.

4. At a meeting with my Special Representative on 7 March 1997, the President of the Republic of Angola, Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, agreed that the date for the inauguration of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation would be determined after the arrival in Luanda of the UNITA deputies and officials. In the meantime, UNITA continued to insist that, before a new Government was formed, the two parties should discuss its programme. In that connection, on 3 March the Government of Angola presented to UNITA a draft programme to be submitted for the consideration of the Council of Ministers after the formation of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. It also stated that the document had taken into account the views expressed in the draft programme circulated by UNITA on 11 February.

5. In a statement made at the celebration of the UNITA anniversary on 13 March, Mr. Savimbi reiterated his party's willingness to participate in the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. At the same time, he again raised the need for an agreed minimum programme for the new Government before its establishment. UNITA confirmed that it would send all its representatives to Luanda between 15 and 17 March. However, it was only on the evening of 17 March that some deputies started to arrive in the Angolan capital. As at 19 March, there were 43 UNITA deputies in Luanda (of a total of 70), some of whom had already been there since February 1997. Seven officials designated to take up posts in the new Government had also arrived in Luanda by that date, out of a total of 11. It is expected that, after the arrival of all UNITA designated officials, the Government will set the date for the inauguration of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation and that this will be endorsed by the Joint Commission.

6. In an attempt to expedite the formation of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation, my Special Representative travelled to Bailundo on 18 March for consultations with Mr. Savimbi. The UNITA leader complained at what he described as attempts by the Government to delay the start of a dialogue between the two parties on a joint programme. He stressed, however, that the problem of the formation of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation could be resolved if a genuine spirit of national reconciliation prevailed. There are indications that the Government is prepared to begin discussion of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation programme without delay, but for this to happen, all UNITA officials should be present in the Angolan capital. My Special Representative reports that intensive consultations on this issue are continuing, and he has presented to the parties additional proposals with a view to resolving the issue within the next few days.

III. OBSERVATIONS

7. I find it regrettable that, despite determined and intensive efforts, the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation has not yet been established. It is a matter of very serious concern that its formation has again been

postponed, owing primarily to the failure of UNITA to send all its officials to Luanda as previously agreed. The repeated delays in the fulfilment of this obligation are having a negative impact on the implementation of major aspects of the peace process, including the normalization of State administration throughout Angola and the demobilization of excess UNITA personnel, who continue to be cantoned in selection and demobilization centres. This situation is seriously undermining the credibility of the peace process and should not be allowed to continue.

8. I realize that the patience of the international community is wearing thin. It is in this spirit that I have decided to visit Angola from 22 to 25 March 1997 with the intention of making a first-hand assessment of the situation and impressing upon the parties the need to establish the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation without any further delay. During my visit to the region, I shall also consult my Special Representative, the representatives of the observer States and other Governments concerned on ways and means of injecting new vigour into the peace process.

UNITED
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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/838
S/1997/240
16 March 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Agenda item 39
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND
SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 51/195 B of 17 December 1996, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it every three months during its fifty-first session on the progress of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. The report, which describes the main developments in Afghanistan during the first three months since the adoption of the resolution, is also intended to fulfil the request by the Security Council for regular information on Afghanistan.

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Military situation

2. The military situation in Afghanistan witnessed yet another upset at the beginning of 1997, with the Taliban forces sweeping through most of the positions held to the north of Kabul by the opposition coalition called the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan (SCDA), which is composed of the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, led by General Rashid Dostum; the Jamiat-i-Islami, led by Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani and Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud; and the Hezb-i-Wahdat led by Mr. Karim Khalili. The Taliban seem to be intent on pressing ahead with their military effort to take the remaining areas still controlled by SCDA. The situation at the front lines

remains volatile, and there are reports of preparations for more fighting when spring arrives.

3. The Taliban launched a major offensive on 16 January, a day after the end of the United Nations-initiated ceasefire talks in Islamabad, and immediately captured Bagram airbase, as well as Charikar, the capital of Parwan province north of Kabul. On 23 January, they captured two other strategic towns, Jabal-os-Saraj and Gulbahar, effectively confining the forces of General Dostum to the north of the Hindu Kush and those of Commander Massoud to the Panjsher valley. During the night of 26-27 January, SCDA forces blew up a section of the Salang highway 25 kilometres north of Jabal-os-Saraj in an attempt to block the Taliban's northward thrust along that highway. The blockade of the Salang pass compelled the Taliban to turn westward for a detour to the northern areas controlled by SCDA. They started advancing along the Gharband valley towards the central province of Bamyan and, on 2 February, occupied Sheikh Ali in Parwan province, 20 kilometres east of the strategic Shebar pass, which commands access to Bamyan, as well as to the northern areas under the control of General Dostum. While consolidating the areas already captured, the Taliban are believed to be preparing for an attack on the pass. On 20 and 21 February, the Hezb-i-Wahdat forces of Mr. Karim Khalili, supported by General Dostum, attacked the Taliban positions in Sheikh Ali, but were not able to dislodge them from the area.

4. The Taliban and SCDA forces were also locked in a drawn-out confrontation in Badghis province, in north-western Afghanistan, with sporadic fighting continuing in the area around the Morgab river. The front line moved back and forth several times across the river, while Qala-i-Naw, the provincial capital of Badghis, remained in Taliban hands despite repeated attempts by SCDA forces to capture it.

5. Unrest also occurred in other locations in Afghanistan. During the night of 28 January, Jalalabad, the provincial capital of Nangarhar, was attacked by an unidentified armed group. There was an exchange of gunfire and rockets before the group was repulsed by the Taliban. On 8 February, fighting broke out in Kunar province between the Taliban and some local forces affiliated with the Hezb-i-Islami, led by Mr. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and the Afghan National Liberation Front (ANFL), led by Mr. Sibghatullah Mojaddedi. The conflict was soon brought under control by Taliban reinforcements. On 23 February, fighting took place between Hezb-i-Islami and SCDA forces near Pul-i-Khumri in Baghlan province over local disputes among their commanders. Fighting was also reported between the local factions in Kunduz.

6. At the end of the reporting period, the Taliban controlled 19 of the 30 provinces of Afghanistan, together with significant parts of Badghis, Parwan and Kapisa provinces. SCDA is confined to eight northern provinces, in addition to parts of Badghis, Parwan and Kapisa provinces.

Political situation

7. Political and military developments in Afghanistan are always closely intertwined. Internally, the rival sides continue to seek political legitimacy for their military activities. The Taliban, judging both from their words and from their activities on the ground, appear determined to gain military and

political control of the whole of Afghanistan and to establish their vision of an Islamic State. They view the other side as opposed to this goal. While consolidating their control of two thirds of the country, the Taliban have persistently demanded formal recognition by the international community as the effective Islamic government of Afghanistan, entitled to occupy the Afghan seat in the United Nations General Assembly. The SCDA alliance objects to the Taliban's forcible imposition of their will on the rest of Afghanistan. Both the Taliban and SCDA are widely believed to have been receiving material and financial support from external allies, while each side blames the other for encouraging foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country.

8. The military developments in Afghanistan, especially the Taliban's recent advances northwards, have caused considerable concern to the countries in the region and beyond. The Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey met at Istanbul on 5 January to discuss the Afghan situation and adopted a declaration that called on the Afghan parties to observe a ceasefire during the coming holy month of Ramadan and to resolve their differences peacefully. They pointed out that a military solution was not a feasible option in Afghanistan.

9. The Islamic Republic of Iran convened a meeting of the Afghan parties at Tehran on 25 and 26 January. Mr. Norbert Holl, Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, attended the meeting as an observer, along with representatives of Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan. However, the Taliban and the Hezb-i-Wahdat (Mr. Karim Khalili) did not take part. The Tehran meeting adopted a declaration that expressed concern over the continuation of armed conflict in Afghanistan and urged the warring parties to abandon the course of hostilities in favour of a constructive dialogue for a settlement.

10. On 24 and 25 February, the Defence Ministers of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan met at Tashkent and reaffirmed their commitment to joint defence made at Almaty on 4 October 1996.

11. In the last three months, the Security Council has held several consultations on Afghanistan during which members expressed concern at the renewed hostilities in Afghanistan. The Council called for a ceasefire and an early resolution of the conflict through negotiation among the warring parties. The Council also reaffirmed its full support for the peacemaking efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

Humanitarian situation

12. In spite of continued instability in certain areas, humanitarian activities are being carried out by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations throughout Afghanistan. Certain policies of the Taliban, in particular with regard to the access of women to education and employment and other human rights issues, remain a source of deep concern.

13. The international community recently took note of the continued displacement of people in several areas of the country, including Badghis province and the cities of Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. It also noted with apprehension the reported forcible displacement of people from villages north of

Kabul. During the period from 24 February to 2 March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees registered some 4,600 internally displaced persons at the Khair Khana checkpoint north of Kabul, bringing the total since 2 January 1997 to over 115,000. These arrivals have placed increased pressure upon the already difficult living conditions in Kabul.

14. While providing emergency assistance to the internally displaced persons, the United Nations has requested the Taliban authorities to take measures, including the issuance of an official statement, to encourage the return to home communities. United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross have stressed to local authorities that a return to these areas is a priority for all humanitarian organizations.

15. In addition to these humanitarian concerns, the Taliban detained in Kabul on 21 February two French nationals working for Action contre la faim, a French-based non-governmental organization, I have appealed to the Taliban authorities through the Head of the Special Mission for the immediate release of the two workers, and the Security Council on 25 February also urged their release. Incidents such as these continue to inhibit the international community's ability to respond to Afghanistan's pressing humanitarian needs.

16. Given the prevailing circumstances in the country, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, convened an International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan, on 21 and 22 January 1997 at Ashgabat. The Head of the Special Mission addressed the Forum, stressing a close link between the provision of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan by the donor community and progress towards a political settlement in Afghanistan. He also reiterated the need to continue humanitarian aid to Afghanistan despite ongoing hostilities. As the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs informed the Security Council on 28 January, efforts are currently under way to develop a strategic framework which, taking into account agreed principles and priorities, will address immediate relief as well as longer-term rehabilitation and development needs in Afghanistan.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIAL MISSION

17. The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan has continued to focus its efforts on an immediate ceasefire through negotiations, under its good offices, among the warring parties. In pursuance of this goal, the Head of the Special Mission and his team have held several meetings with the Taliban and the SCDA leaders, as well as other Afghan personalities.

18. From 13 to 15 January, the Special Mission convened at Islamabad an Intra-Afghan Working Group, which, for the first time, brought together the representatives of the Taliban and SCDA. The Taliban side was represented by Mullah Wakil Ahmed, Mufti Masoom Afghani and Mullah Abdul Wahab. The three factions of SCDA were represented by General Mohammed Painda (for General Dostum), Engineer Mohammed Ishaq (for Commander Massoud) and Mr. Rasul Taleb (for Mr. Karim Khalili). In a frank and friendly atmosphere, the Working Group discussed a ceasefire, including the establishment of an all-

party commission to supervise it; the exchange of prisoners and bodies; the status of Kabul as a neutral city administered by a civilian authority; the deployment of a neutral police force; and the establishment of a broad-based Islamic government in Afghanistan. As it was not a decision-making body, the Working Group discussed these issues ad referendum. The participants agreed that the Working Group should continue to exist, as it provided the parties with a valuable forum for political dialogue in a free and secure environment.

19. The second meeting of the Intra-Afghan Working Group was held at the office of the Special Mission in Islamabad from 24 to 26 February. Mullah Mohammed Sadiq, Mufti Masoom Afghani and Hajji Fazal Mohammed represented the Taliban. General Mohammed Painda and Mr. Rasul Taleb represented SCDA, while Engineer Mohammed Ishaq was not able to attend owing to bad weather. The Working Group had an extensive exchange of views on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. It discussed at length such important matters as confidence-building measures, the draft of a ceasefire agreement prepared by the Special Mission, the exchange of prisoners and the situation in Kabul. Both sides agreed to continue their negotiations on all pending issues and requested the Special Mission to make new proposals on these issues for further discussion between the political leaders of both sides in the near future.

20. At the meeting, the two sides tentatively agreed to the proposal of the Special Mission that a political-level meeting between General Dostum and Mullah Rabbani be convened by 17 March to discuss key issues considered by the Working Group. The two sides were also in agreement that they would establish a list of up to 50 prisoners of war for exchange as a confidence-building measure.

21. Upon the conclusion of the second meeting of the Working Group, the Head of the Special Mission travelled to Kandahar on 4 March to discuss with the Taliban Shura member and Governor of Kandahar, Mullah Mohammad Hassan, the next steps to be taken, including the proposed political meeting and the prisoner-of-war exchange. On 6 March, he flew to Mazar-i-Sharif for talks with General Dostum to discuss the same matter.

22. The Head of the Special Mission also held various consultations with other Member States in an effort to seek and coordinate their assistance to the activities of the Special Mission. On 21 January, he met with the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurad Niyazov, in Ashkhabad, and the following day with the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Islam Karimov, in Tashkent in order to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and the support these countries could provide to the United Nations peace efforts. On the occasion of his visit to Tehran to attend the meeting on Afghanistan on 25 and 26 January, he also discussed Afghanistan with the leaders of Iran. Similar consultations were held in Islamabad with officials and envoys of several countries.

IV. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

23. The situation in Afghanistan remains precarious. Success in the United Nations peace efforts remains elusive. The military situation is dangerously fluid and may soon deteriorate further with the onset of the spring thaw. Despite the continuous suffering of the Afghan people, the warring factions have

not heeded the repeated appeals for peace and appear determined to pursue the military option. However, I remain convinced that a negotiated settlement is the only solution to this long-standing conflict and that the United Nations is the most appropriate forum to bring this about. No one should imagine that a military victory by one party over the others will resolve the Afghan problem in the long term.

24. I believe that the United Nations and its Member States have to increase efforts to address the Afghan question before the situation deteriorates still further. It is necessary for us all to coordinate our efforts so as to increase international pressure on the Afghan parties to solve the conflict in a peaceful way. To this end, I propose to convene a meeting of concerned countries shortly, using the formula that was used for the meeting held in New York on 18 November 1996. The aim of the meeting would be to reassess the situation following recent political/military developments and to discuss how best to promote a negotiated settlement of the conflict, including reinforcing the United Nations peacemaking efforts.

25. I should also like to take note of proposals that an intra-Afghan meeting among the warring parties be held outside Afghanistan in order to provide an opportunity for them to talk to each other in a secure environment. I intend to consult the Afghan parties, Member States and international organizations, in particular the Organization of the Islamic Conference, on the advisability of such a meeting, and will put forward a concrete plan if and when I decide that it will contribute to the peace process.

26. I should like to conclude this report by renewing my appeal to the warring factions in Afghanistan to cease all hostilities and take up serious and honest negotiations under the good offices of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. I also urge the countries with interest and influence in Afghanistan to coordinate their activities with those of the Special Mission and to refrain from supporting one Afghan party against others, thus prolonging the conflict.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/241
21 March 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Egypt and Qatar: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling its relevant resolutions, in particular those concerning Jerusalem and Israeli settlements,

Aware of General Assembly resolution 51/223 of 13 March 1997,

Stressing its support for the Middle East Peace Process and the need for the implementation of the agreements and commitments reached,

1. Demands that Israel immediately cease construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement in East Jerusalem, as well as all other Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on the developments in this regard.

97-07786 (E) 210397

UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/242
21 March 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 21 MARCH 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT OBSERVER OF PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the current meeting of the Council with regard to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

(Signed) Dr. Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations

97-07744 (E) 210397